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With Mayo Clinic internist
Amit Sood, M.D.

Question

Stop multitasking and learn how to focus

Multitasking isn't working for me. Any tips on how to focus my attention and improve my concentration?

Staying healthy (12)

- Will an air purifier eliminate cigarette smoke?
- Cellphones and cancer: What's the risk?
- Sitting risks: How harmful is too much sitting?
- see all in Staying healthy

Dental care (7)

- When to brush your teeth
- Whitening toothpaste: Does it whiten teeth?
- Heart disease prevention: Does oral health matter?
- see all in Dental care

Skin care (9)

- Does sunscreen expire?
- Tanning beds: Safer than the sun?
- Hydrated skin: Does drinking water help?
- see all in Skin care

Nail care (4)

- Acrylic nails: Can they harm natural nails?
- Split fingernails: Can they be prevented?
- Nail biting: Does it cause long-term damage?
- see all in Nail care

Eye care (2)

- Choosing sunglasses: Is UV protection important?
- Eye exam: Is a laser retina scan worthwhile?

Sleep (9)

- Sleep and technology: What's the connection?

Answer

from Amit Sood, M.D.

Many people find it hard to focus, but it is a skill you can develop. Try these suggestions for improving your focus:

- Screen out distractions.** Start by turning off the TV, putting down your phone and logging out of email. Not convinced it'll help? Try this experiment: Eliminate noncritical screen time for two days and see how much more you get done.
- Plan for peaks and valleys.** Are you a morning person? Then don't squander that time on email. Instead use it to tackle projects that require your full concentration. Low energy in the afternoon? That's the time to go through your inbox or catch up on your filing.
- Put it out of your mind.** Too many mental notes make for a cluttered mind. All that unfinished business saps your mental energy. So dump it. Put whatever's on your mind on paper or capture it digitally. Think of it as off-site storage.
- Train your brain.** Any skill worth having requires practice. Learning to focus is no different. Invest time in mastering attention training or meditation — both are great ways to practice taming distractions and improving focus.

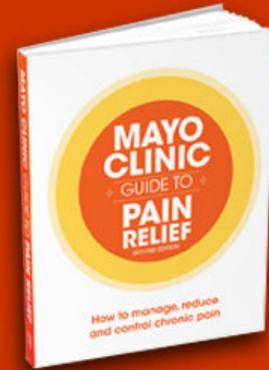
What's the payoff? You'll not only get more done but also enjoy more flow — when you're so absorbed in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. Flow creates a sense of fulfillment and engagement and, yes, even contentment.

Next question
[Healthy heart for life: Avoiding heart disease](#)

See Also

- [Mental health: What's normal, what's not](#)
- [Empty nest syndrome: Tips for coping](#)
- [Self-esteem: 4 steps to feel better about yourself](#)
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- How many hours of sleep are enough?
- Sleep aids: Could antihistamines help me sleep?
- see all in Sleep

Mental health (2)

- Passive-aggressive behavior: What are the red flags?
- Stop multitasking and learn how to focus

Healthy at work (4)

- Shift work: Improving daytime sleep
- Sitting risks: How harmful is too much sitting?
- Leg pain after prolonged standing or sitting: A concern?
- see all in Healthy at work

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- Survival is a team sport
- Be open to solutions and silver linings
- Learned optimism — Make your inner dialogue more positive
- Recognizing that life is unfair
- Your attitude affects your reality
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- To mend you must let go of anger and resentment
- Does nature or nurture dictate your path in life?
- When is self-help not enough?
- Dispatch distractions by living in the moment
- Strong emotions short-circuit logic
- Clouded judgment, poor choices result from stress
- Resiliency: Who goes the distance and why?
- Anger: Taking the heat out of the moment

References

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